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THE ART OF ENGLISH SHOOTING

G. Edie

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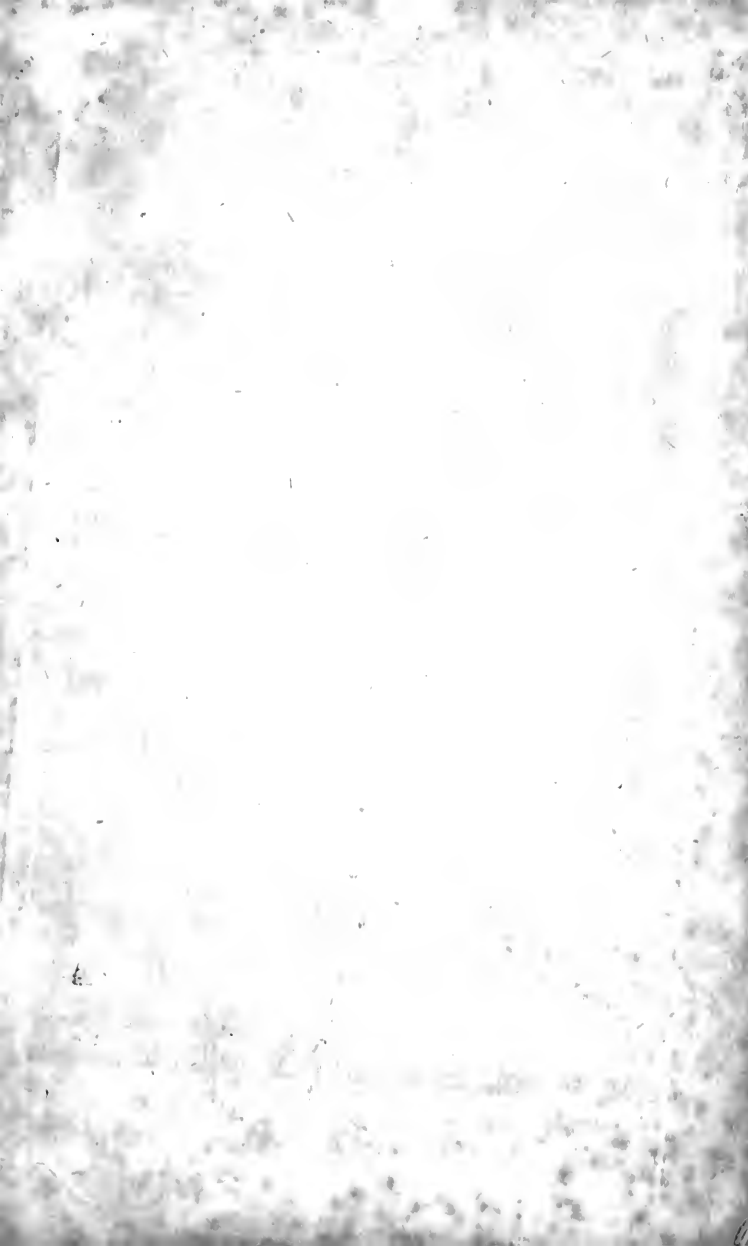
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FRONTISPIECE



*At Birds the Sportsman takes his Time,
While Health and Pleasure are his Game.*

A R T

O F

English Shooting ;

UNDER THE FOLLOWING HEADS:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Of the Knowledge of a good Fowling-Piece. | Of Pheasant Shooting, with the ordering of Spaniels. |
| The ordering and managing the Fowling-Piece. | Of Woodcock Shooting. |
| The Appendages of the Fowling-Piece. | Of Snipe Shooting. |
| The Choice of Powder, Shot, and Flints. | Of Water and Fen-Fowl Shooting; and the Use of proper Dogs. |
| Of Partridge Shooting, with the Choice and ordering of Pointers. | Of Upland Winter Shooting. |

W I T H

NECESSARY OBSERVATIONS

F O R T H E

YOUNG SPORTSMAN,

WHEN OUT AND ON RETURNING HOME.

By GEORGE EDIE, Gent.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. COOKE, at *Shakespeare's Head*, in *Pater-noster Row*. M D C C L X X V I I I .

[Price One Shilling.]




THE following Treatise on Shooting
(in which I have been as concise under
the different heads as the nature of the
subject would admit of) must at least be
found useful to the Young Sportsman. A
complete work of this kind, I am sensible,
has been long wanted; but whether the
brief contents of these pages have, in any
degree, a merit to such a title, I leave to
the determination of my brother sportsmen
in general.

* * * *This Pamphlet being entered in the
Hall-Book of the Company of Sta-
tioners, and at the Stamp Office (ac-
cording to Act of Parliament) who-
ever pirates the whole or any part of
it, shall be prosecuted as the Law
directs.*



THE
ART
OF
English Shooting.

*Of the Knowledge of a good Fowling-
Piece.*

UR English Fowling-piece has, of late years, met with so much improvement, that we may, without partiality, esteem it equal, if not superior, to any other in Europe. Notwithstanding, it must be confessed, we have many more bad than good Pieces among us ; wherefore
it

it will be very necessary to lay down a few hints for the use of the young sportsman ; that he may not ignorantly purchase a Piece worth little or nothing, when he is perhaps desirous of having one of the best sort.

As to the apparent good properties of one of our modern Pieces, they may be reckoned thus : the barrel of a tolerable large bore, and very smooth, with a handsome outside, and the length from three foot to three foot six inches ; the lock rather small, with good and strong springs ; the stock neat, not too much bent in the butt ; and, on the whole, the Piece to rise light and handy to the shoulder ; the mounting may be according to fancy ; however, the brass, as being less liable to be damaged by wet, and no trouble to keep clean, is certainly preferable to the steel.

The internal goodness of a Piece can only be known by trial, without which no new one should be purchased.

For the purpose of trying a gun, the following hints may suffice : tack a large
sheet

sheet of brown paper, with a card in the middle, on a clean barn-door, or some such place, that the degree of scattering may be the better observed; stand at about the distance of seventy yards, and try at first the common charge of a pipe of powder, and a pipe and half of shot; and, to do the gun justice, be as steady as possible in your aim: if you find you have thrown any at this distance into the card, you may safely conclude the Piece is a good one; or if you have missed the card, perhaps through unsteadiness, and thrown a tolerable sprinkling into the sheet, you may have the same good opinion of the gun; but if you find none in the sheet, and are sensible of having shot steady, try then an equal quantity of powder and shot (which some barrels are found to carry best) at the same distance; and if you then miss giving the sheet a tolerable sprinkling, refuse the Piece, as being but an indifferent one, if you are determined to have one of the best sort, which certainly is most advisable: and this trial may be reckoned altogether

gether sufficient for a gun that is recommended by any gunsmith as a first-rate one.

For the second, or more indifferent sort, let fifty-five or sixty yards be the distance of trial, and a judgment formed according to the above rule: but it must be observed, that as some Pieces carry a larger quantity of powder and shot than others, so it will be adviseable to try three or four different quantities; but never to exceed a pipe and a half of powder, and the proportionable quantity of shot, as abovementioned.



The ordering and managing a Gun

WHEN a person is master of a good Piece, the keeping it in proper order is a main article to the doing execution with it: it is necessary the inside of the barrel, the touch-hole, and the lock be kept clean; and the springs and moving parts of the lock properly oiled.

The barrel should be washed at least after every eighteen or twenty fires, where the best sort of powder is used; but if the gunpowder is an inferior sort, then the barrel will require the oftener washing.

The best method of washing a barrel is, by taking out the britch-pin; but as this can seldom be conveniently done, take the barrel out of the stock, and put the britch-end into a pail of warm water, leaving the touch-hole open; then, with an iron rod, with tow or a bit of linnen rag at the end, draw up and down in the syringe manner, till it is
B
quite

quite clean ; changing the water, and rinsing the inside, as the foulness requires : when the barrel is perfectly clean, its inside must be dried by tow, or linnen rags ; and when this is done, it will be proper to put it in a red-hot iron, of six or eight inches in length, (which any blacksmith will furnish,) and move it up and down to dry any remaining damp : the outside of the barrel should be well dried, and a little oil rubbed over every time of cleaning.



The Appendages of the Gun.

THE necessary appendages in the Fowling-piece are, an iron rod, with a screw or worm at one end, and a scrape (to clear rust or caked powder) at the other, which rod is to be used for the washing and dry-cleaning the inside of the barrel, and a turn-screw should be kept for the use of the lock.

A flask, or horn, for the carriage of the powder, the size and shape of which may be according to fancy; however, it will be proper to have the measure of the charge to hold the exact quantity the gun is found to carry.

A leather pouch, or small canvas bag, to carry the shot; with a tin, or other measure, that will hold the exact charge of the gun: this article of the exact measure for the powder and shot should be particularly observed; as it not only saves trouble, but is charging with more certainty and exactness.

The Choice of Powder, Shot, and Flints.

THE best sort of Powder is small-grained, hard to crumble between the finger and thumb, and of a bluish cast; which should be the only sort used, by rights, for the Fowling-piece.

The shot should be round and solid; and the more it has these properties the better it is: the size must be according to the shooting that it is intended for; there is from N^o 1 to 6, and smaller, which is called mustard-seed, or dust-shot; but N^o 5 is small enough for any shooting whatsoever; the N^o 1, may be used for wild-geese; the N^o 2, for ducks, widgeons, and other water-fowl; the N^o 3, for pheasants, (partridges after the first month) and all the fen-fowl; the N^o 4, for partridges, woodcocks, &c. and the N^o 5, for snipes, and all the smaller birds.

As to the choice of flints, the clear ones are the best; but whether the dark or light sort, is immaterial, as there

there are good of both kinds: the size should be suited to the lock of the gun, and be neither too large and thick, nor too small and slight; the first will not give fire freely, and the other will be very apt to break.



Of Partridge-Shooting.

Partridge-shooting begins, by Act of Parliament, on the first of September, and ends the twelfth of February ; and which, on account of the cleanness, little fatigue, and more certain diversion than any other, by their being found in coveys, and taking short flights, is generally esteemed the genteelest and best sport we have in England.

In the beginning of the season, they haunt the wheat, barley, oat, peas and bean stubbles ; but the wheat-vetch is their favourite : they also lie in turnips, clover-feed, on fallow-land ; and indeed, at times, are found any where.

The most proper dog, and what is generally used for Partridge-shooting, is the pointer, a dog extremely well calculated for the sport ; as Partridges can seldom or ever be seen on the ground, if the stubble, &c. be but three or four inches high : if the pointer be staunch, and have a good nose, he will seldom
pass

pass in common fields within forty yards of a covey, without intimating by a point pretty near the exact line they lie in.

A brace, or leash of dogs, are sufficient, where the fields are not uncommonly large ; if they are, two brace or more will be preferable:

The small light dogs are, for many reasons, to be preferred to the large, heavy, Spanish breed ; as they hunt the ground over quicker ; quarter it better ; and will go over two or three times as much as the heavy sort, without being tired, or loosing the skin off their feet.

When we come on the covey, and the dogs point and back one another well, which should be carefully observed, reprimanding such as are in fault ; then we either put on the dog who first made the point, or walk the covey up ; either way may be practised, but the last is rather preferable.

Now.

Now appears the difference between the good and bad sportsman; the greatest coolness and composure are now necessary: when they rise, lift your gun deliberately to your shoulder; single out that bird which flies most separate from the rest, and when you find your aim true and steady, and not before then, fire; observing carefully the way the rest of the covey take, and mark, as nearly as you can, where they go down.

As to rules for shooting flying, they are of little or no signification: a good gun, a cool and steady aim, and practice; for the nice difference in aiming at or before the mark, must all contribute to make a good flying marksman.

The best of Partridge-shooting, in the sportsman's esteem, is, when the birds take to the hedges, (as we term it) which is running under the hedges in the time of rain, for shelter; where they will lie for some time after the rain is over: when it is fair, and not before, take two or three spaniels, or, rather, a brace of good hedge-pointers, and

and hunt the hedges near where you know the covey lies : two persons should go together in this sport, one on each side the hedge ; the bird being reckoned his shot, on whose side of the hedge it flies out. The birds will soon separate, and afford excellent diversion, by rising singly, and near you, giving time for the better aim.

When pointers are used, the birds are frequently obliged to be beat out, by striking the bush where the point is made, and they will often lie and suffer themselves to be taken by both spaniels and pointers ; so stupid and lazy are they after rain.

In this sport, the birds should be carefully marked, or it will be but very tiresome diversion.

Of Pheasant-Shooting.

THIS sport begins, by Act of Parliament, on the first of October, and lasts till the first of February.

The Pheasant's brood is called an eye, as the brood of the Partridge is a covey. They are of late years become much more scarce than formerly; however, they are found in the woods in most of the counties of England, more or less: they afford very pretty shooting, though far more fatiguing and tiresome than partridge-shooting; owing to the bushes, briars, and other disagreeable circumstances of the woods.

Spaniels are to be used in this sport; and two, three, or four brace, may be taken together into the wood; the number of persons together should not exceed three or four, and they should go regularly up and down the wood, and spread at about thirty or forty yards distance: the dogs should not be of the
wild

wild fort, but keen-nosed, and apt to give their tongue, (i. e. bark or yelp) when they come on the scent.

Keep as near the dogs as possible; and when they spring, one or more, let such only fire at the bird as to whom, in point of rising, it belongs; which rule should be always observed in all sorts of shooting in company. In pheasant-shooting, the trees frequently interfere, therefore forbear firing till you have a clear aim at the bird; which, if it cannot be had, it is better to let him escape for another chance.



Of Woodcock-Shooting.

THE season for Cock-shooting, generally begins towards the latter end of November; they are birds of passage, and come over to us in flights in the night-time, about the full of the moon: the first flight, which is sometimes in October, is commonly very scanty; but they continue coming over, more or less, every moon, till February; consequently, it will generally be found they are in greater plenty towards the latter end of the winter; though this is no absolute rule, as they are very irregular with regard to number in their coming over; sometimes the first or second flight being the largest we have through the winter, and the others very trifling: they remain with us generally till the middle or latter end of March.

Their haunts are chiefly in the springs and bogs, in woods and coppices; and in the beginning of the winter, before the leaves are well off, they prefer the out-parts of the woods.

For springing them, we use spaniels; and a leash, or two brace, of the steady, keen-nosed sort, are sufficient for two or three shooters; which are as many as should go together in this sport; and, as in pheasant-shooting, it is necessary to keep as near the dogs as possible; which should always be observed where spaniels are used.

A Woodcock is a very tender bird; and being a large mark, affords easy, pretty shooting, where a person has got the art of shooting flying tolerable well; but it frequently occurs that the bird rises in a perpendicular line, which is the most difficult shot that is; in this case, an unexperienced sportsman will find it more adviseable to forbear firing (if opportunity will allow) till the bird has arrived at the height of the perpendicular, and flies offward; but as a shot will be often lost by this delay, the good marksman should never wait it, except he judges the shot will be better.

Of Snipe-Shooting.

THE Snipe, like the woodcock, is a bird of passage; they begin coming over to us about the middle or latter end of October, and remain with us pretty forward in the spring. They frequent, like the woodcock, the springs, bogs, and marshy places; but with this difference, that the cock seeks these in cover, and the snipe in the open clear parts, as fields and commons.

Snipes afford as pretty sport to a good marksman, as any bird whatsoever; tho' they are very quick fliers, yet are very tender, and will fall almost at the bare report of the gun.

The several disagreeable circumstances met with in wood-shooting, are in this sport avoided; and a person has here no other inconvenience, than a little wet and dirt, which may be easily guarded against by wearing boots.

We

We spring snipes either with spaniels, or by making a slight sharp kind of noise, about the places where we know they haunt: they mostly fly directly against the wind (if there is any material air stirring), and a shot after them is the best and most sure: the slant and cross shots are rather difficult, as they are a small mark, and fly exceeding quick.

For practice in this, which is very nice, swallow-shooting may be used in summer to advantage.



Of Water-fowl and Fen-shooting.

THE haunts of the Water-fowl, as Geese, Ducks, Widgeons, &c. are well known.

In shooting them, we use the longest killing gun, and as large shot, as the N^o 1 or 2.

The proper dog is the rough, curled, water spaniel, of which the white sort are commonly the best; they should be under the strictest command; be ready at fetching any thing out of the water, without biting it; and catching what is only wounded; should be used, on occasion, to creep quiet, and close behind the master's heel; of such, one or two will be sufficient for this sort of shooting.

The fowl may either be shot swimming, or, which is better, taken on the wing; as in the water they are strongly guarded by the close lying of their wings and feathers; therefore, if
a person

a person is a good marksman, it will be always best to spring them first.

The best place to throw the shot, if opportunity will allow, is under the wing, as that is by much the tenderest place ; and the worse of all is the breast, as the feathers here lie extremely thick and close. This sport, though very good, where wild-fowl are plenty, is very little practised by gentlemen, owing to the several disagreeable circumstances attending it.

The fen-shooting is but little followed by gentlemen sportsmen, any more than wild-fowl shooting. The haunts of the fen-birds are sufficiently known by their title.

We use, in general, the N^o 3 shot, which will serve as well for the bittern, and curlew, as the plover.

One or two steady water or land spaniels may be used ; and it will be always best to spring the birds before firing.

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Of

Of various Upland Winter Shooting.

OUR common field shooting is generally best in frosty weather, and when the ground has a tolerable cover of snow. We have in most parts of England, a variety which affords very tolerable sport; the most common are, different sorts of wild pigeons, field-fares, starlings, redwings, &c.

In this diversion we use no dog; and the fewer shooters together the better.

The several kinds of pigeons require the No 3 shot, as being strong birds; and may be either taken on the wing, or as they perch on a tree; but the rock pigeons are best, in general, taken on the wing; however, it sometimes happens that a shot at them sitting is more proper; in this, discretion must direct. The fieldfare is a very common bird, it seems to delight most in large close orchards; but in hard weather, in the fields; they frequent the haws bushes, and afford very pretty diversion: though they are naturally very wild, yet, when a hard frost is set in, there is no diffi-
cult_

culty in getting within forty yards of them, at the time they are keenly engaged on their feeding bush: here they will sit forty or fifty sometimes together.

The proper way of managing this kind of shooting is, if possible, to secrete behind a bush, or in a hedge, within shot of one of the bushes they frequent: when a sufficient number (as the person may judge) are together, to fire at them as they sit; what are killed should be taken up, and the shooter replace himself as before: in a quarter of an hour, or less, more will probably be on the bush; and he may often go on shooting in the same place, all the while they are on their feed, which is from a little after sun-rise till eleven or twelve o'clock; and in the afternoon they go on again, about an hour before sunset; but such sport as this must be expected only where fieldfares are in great plenty.

Starlings afford tolerable diversion in shooting; in winter they, for the most part, go in flocks from twenty to fifty; they delight chiefly to be in moist pas-

tures among cattle, and sometimes fit so close together on the ground, that a person may kill twenty-five or thirty at a shot ; taking these on the ground, or wing, may be left at the discretion of the shooter ; but the wing will be best preferred : what are shot, should have their heads immediately pulled off, which, by their bleeding, prevents a bitterness of taste they would otherwise have : use for these and fieldfares the N^o 4 shot.

In shooting larks in flocks, use the N^o 5 shot ; and make it a rule always to take them on the wing : here it will be adviseable to have the gun scatter more than common ; in order to do this, put in an equal quantity of powder and shot, supposing the usual charge to be three parts shot to two of powder ; but if the gun, in common, carries an equal quantity of each, then it will be necessary to put in only about three parts of shot to four of powder : and in shooting any of the smaller birds in flocks, this rule of charging should be observed.

Necessary Observations for the young Sportsman.

THE sportsman should make it a general rule to turn out with or before the sun ; the morning is the best time for all sorts of shooting : he should be provided with a spare flint or two, and a strong pocket knife that will serve, on occasion, the purpose of a turn-screw ; he should take out the best powder that can be got, and that sized shot which suits the sport he pursues.

When we come to the place where we turn out, if dogs are used, we put them on the hunt by whistling or hying on (as the term is) : it is necessary to observe the motions of spaniels, for there are but few but what will give some intimation when they come on scent ; use them to come in at a sharp call, and never suffer them to run after a bird, except it is wounded : observe to let the dogs, whether spaniels or pointers, have the wind as much as possible (that is, let them hunt against the wind).

In using pointers when they are perceived drawing on a point, and are known to be not quite staunch, call to them to take heed, and if they spring without standing, correct them slightly with a switch, or small stick, or better a pocket dog-whip, speaking angrily to them, and keep them at a distance the remaining part of the day, but not so much as to make them sulkey; however, if their after behaviour deserves encouragement, it may not be improper to take them into favour.

Observe after a fire never to blow through the barrel, but charge again immediately, while the inside of the barrel is hot and dry; by this method of immediate charging, a gun seldom hangs fire, and carries much smarter and better; there is no occasion to wipe either pan or flint while out (if the flint is good, which, by the bye, it always should be); but on returning home, wipe clean with tow, or linen rags, both out and inside of the barrel, and also the lock from the soil of the powder; when it is thus cleaned, hang it up, and if it can be so ordered, where a constant
winter

winter fire is kept, hanging it at a moderate distance from the fire: the powder flask should also be kept in the same degree of warmth in winter time; if the gun has received any rain or wet, let it be wiped thoroughly dry, and stand some time near a fire, to dry any remaining damp, and have a little oil rubbed over it before hanging up.

Lastly, it may be observed, if a gun is brought home loaded, if it is not very foul, it may remain four or five days fit for use, but never should longer, as it will be apt to hang fire; and even if it remains but one night loaded, the touch-hole should be cleared with a pin, and fresh primed: but it is a good custom with many never to suffer a gun to be hung up charged, but on returning home to draw the shot and fire off the powder, by which, they not only prevent some degree of hanging fire, but also are clear of any accident happening by unwary or ignorant meddlers, of which we have had many fatal instances.

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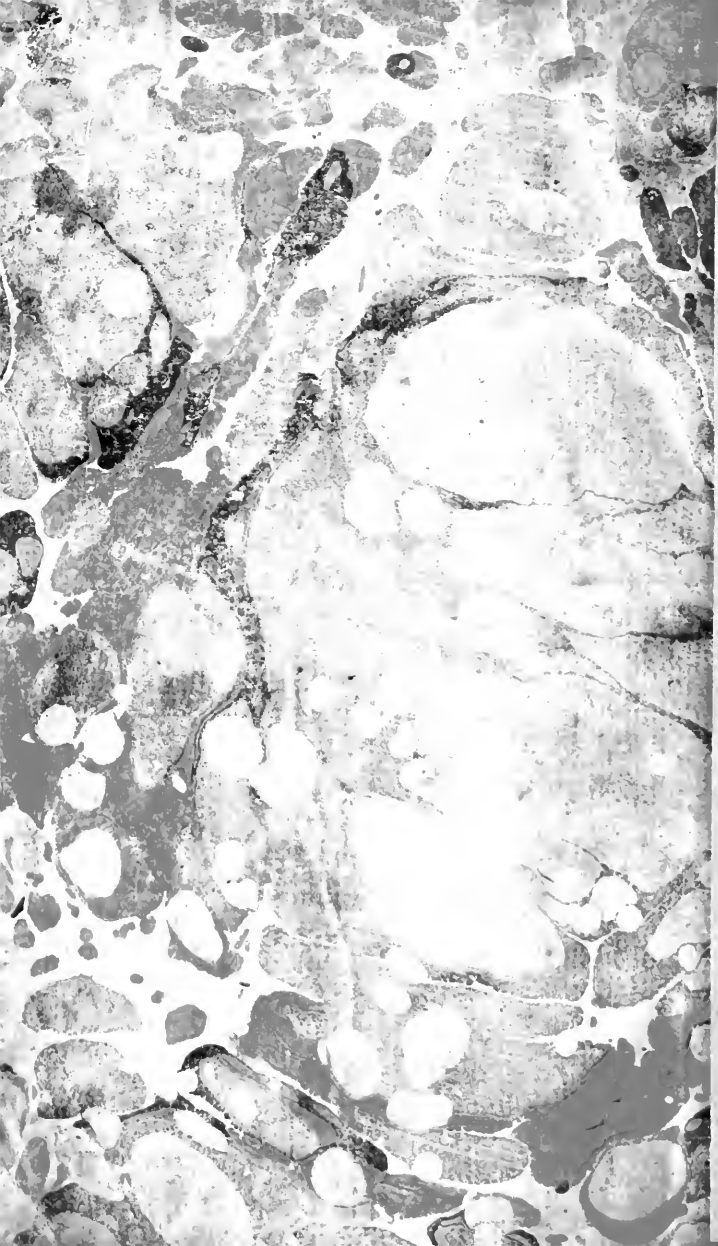
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